



The Loose Tooth

Thomas has a loose tooth. Thomas uses his tongue to wiggle the loose tooth. The tooth does not fall out.

Thomas uses his finger to wiggle the loose tooth. The tooth still does not fall out.

Thomas is sad. He is sad because the loose tooth will not fall out. Mom gives Thomas a big, shiny, fat, red apple. Thomas takes a big, big, bite. Out comes Thomas's loose tooth. Only it is not loose anymore. Now it is lost! He smiles, and there is a big gap where his tooth used to be—out at last!



Down by the Pond

Anna and Jeffrey took a walk by the pond. They saw an egg in the mud. The egg was big and white. They could see that the egg was cracking.

"Look!" said Anna. "There is an egg, and it is cracking!"

"I see it too," said Jeffrey. "What kind of egg is it?"

"I don't know," said Anna.

Anna and Jeffrey stood and watched the egg. Soon they saw a leg come out.

"Look!" said Anna. "I see a leg!"

Soon they saw a head come out of the egg.

"Look!" said Jeffrey. "I see the head!"

When the baby came out of the egg, Anna and Jeffrey saw it was a baby turtle. The baby turtle looked just like its mom and dad. It had a shell just like them. The shell was hard and green. It had a head, four legs, and a little tail, exactly like its mom and dad!

"Look!" said Anna. "It's a baby turtle!"

"I see the baby turtle too," said Jeffrey.

The baby turtle slowly left the egg and walked to the water. The baby turtle dove into the water and swam away. Anna and Jeffrey couldn't believe what they just saw! They couldn't wait to share it with their friends.



Bird Talk

Birds live all over the world. Birds are the only animals with feathers. Some birds have colorful feathers and some birds have dull feathers.

All birds have two legs. Some birds can walk on their legs, and some birds hop on their legs. Some birds can stand on one leg!

All birds have wings. Some birds can fly with their wings. Some birds cannot fly with their wings, but they sure look pretty!

All birds have beaks. They can use their beaks to pick up food. Some birds can use their beaks to open nuts or seeds, and some birds can use their beaks to go fishing! Birds can also use their beaks to carry things.

All birds lay eggs. Birds use sticks, rocks, or string to make a nest. The birds lay their eggs in the nest. The mom or dad bird sits on the eggs to keep them warm.

The smallest bird is the hummingbird. The largest bird is the ostrich. Which bird do you think lays the bigger egg?



Helpful Bugs

Do you like bugs? Some people are scared of bugs. Some people think bugs are creepy! But some bugs are very helpful.

Ladybugs are helpful bugs. Ladybugs are red and black. They can also be orange and black. Ladybugs eat aphids. Aphids are bad bugs. Aphids eat the leaves and stems on plants. This is not good. When ladybugs eat aphids, they help keep plants looking nice.

Bees are other helpful bugs. Bees are yellow and black. Bees can be big. Bees can be small. Bees sip nectar from plants. Bees make honey from the nectar. This is helpful because people like honey for food. But watch out! Bees can sting!

Do you know any other bugs that are helpful?



The Special Gift

It was a very special day for Ben. It was his favorite day of the year. Today Ben was turning eight years old. He had invited ten friends to share the fun with him, and they would arrive soon.

But Ben was not smiling, and there was a stain on his shorts from a fallen tear. He looked outside. The balloons he had tied to the mailbox were starting to get wet.

Ben thought of the games he wanted to play in the backyard. His dad had found sacks for three-legged races. "Now," Ben whispered, "that's ruined."

A car drove into the driveway. His friend Danny jumped out and yelled, "Happy birthday!" He handed Ben a present. Another car arrived. Ben's mother announced, "Oh, look. It's Alex. And look, Ben," she continued, "another very special guest has come out for your party."

Ben turned his head and looked at the sky. He covered his eyes from the bright light. He felt the heat on his face. The guest he had been waiting and hoping for had come to his party. "It's going to be a great party after all!" Ben yelled.



To the Zoo

It was field trip day. Miss Ray was taking her class to the zoo. She got to school early to get the name tags ready.

In the morning the children came into the room. Miss Ray handed out the name tags. "Everyone choose a partner," she said. "Then we'll get on the bus!"

The children got on the bus and sat in a seat with their partners. Parents joined the class to help. The bus was noisy! They sang songs and talked about the animals they hoped they would see.

When the bus arrived at the zoo, Miss Ray said, "We will all stay together and follow the path to see the animals."

After they saw many different animals, Miss Ray said, "It's time to go back to school!" The class climbed back on the bus. This time, there were not many sounds on the bus, except the sounds of snoring!



Art Museums

An art museum is a fun place to be. You can see all kinds of art. Go see the paintings on display. Some are big and some are small. Some are all one color and some show many colors. There are so many exciting ways to paint. No two paintings are ever the same. Artists make each artwork an original piece.

Go see the sculptures. There are some sculptures made of clay. There are other sculptures made of wood. Sculptures can be made from anything, even metal or objects you find on the ground. You can walk all the way around a sculpture.

I like to look at sculptures from the back.

Some art museums have a corner just for kids. You can learn about art history in these places. Sometimes you can create an artwork of your own. Be sure to practice at home to improve your skills. Maybe your art will be in a museum one day.



At the Library

Have you been to a library lately? A library has all the books you need. It has books that tell your favorite stories. It has books on any topic you can name. It does not cost money to borrow a book. All you need is a library card. You can get a card at the front desk. The card will have your name on it.

Libraries today have more than just books. Some have movies. Some have music. You can borrow movies or music with your card, too.

Most libraries have a place just for kids. This is the best part of the library. Everything you want is in one place. You can ask for help. A librarian knows where everything belongs. Librarians can help you find what you need.

So find your local library and see the books today!



The Dream

Yesterday in school during math class, John sat at his desk and yawned. Then he couldn't stop yawning. Then his friend Penny started yawning. Before long, Rob and Sue were yawning, too.

Even Mrs. Hunter let out a big yawn as she wrote some math problems on the chalkboard.

John looked around the room and everyone was yawning!

Now everyone's eyes were closing. Mrs. Hunter's eyes kept opening and closing, too. John heard Sue snore, then he heard Rob snore and Penny was snoring, too. John could not believe it. Everyone was falling asleep and snoring.

John listened to the snores and watched everyone sleeping in class. Then it happened. John let out a big yawn and his eyes popped open. He looked around the room. He wasn't in school at all. He was at his desk at home trying to work on some math problems and had fallen asleep in his chair. All that snoring and yawning had been a dream. What a relief!



Bucket by Bucket

Mom and Mike go to the beach on a sunny Saturday afternoon. Mike builds a sandcastle, while Mom reads a book on her beach towel.

First, Mike uses a shovel to fill a bucket with sand. He packs the sand tightly down in the bucket.

Next, he pours a little bit of water in the bucket. This gets the sand wet. Water helps keep the sand together.

Mike turns the bucket over onto a flat area of sand and lifts up the bucket. The sand stays together, and now Mike has started to build his castle.

Then Mike fills and empties the bucket again and again. Soon his castle has walls and towers. Finally, Mike digs holes for windows and doors.

He's almost done when waves come up and take his castle out to sea. Time to start over again!



Sliding Along

You lift a leaf in a shady, dirt-filled garden, and there it is. It's an animal that moves slowly on one big foot. What is it, you wonder? It's a snail!

Snails can live on land and in the water. All snails have a hard shell covering their bodies.

You can keep water snails in the water in a fish tank. They will help keep the glass clean.

Like most snails, a land snail has two feelers on its head. It also has eyes and a mouth on its head. Snails don't like hot and dry weather and stay in shady, moist areas. During very cold winter weather, snails hibernate in the ground.

Most land snails eat rotting plants. They also eat flowers, and many gardeners aren't happy when they see snails.

Everywhere it goes, a land snail leaves a trail of slime that it pours out as it moves. The slime helps the snail move on its one foot. The foot is a big body part, made mostly of muscle. This muscle moves in a wave, taking the snail with it. When a snail is disturbed, it pulls itself into its shell to stay safe. Also, if the weather is too dry, the snail can retreat into its shell and seal off the entrance to protect its body from drying up.

If you see a one-footed animal letting out slime, it's most likely a snail.



Play the Piano

A piano is a musical instrument that has 36 black keys and 52 white keys. Each key is hooked to a small felt hammer. To play a piano, you press down a key. When a key is pressed down, its hammer hits the string, and the string vibrates, making a sound.

Some keys hit short strings, which make a high sound. Other keys hit long strings, which make a low sound.

The keys for the lowest sounds are on the far left of the piano. The keys for the highest sounds are on the far right. Many keys can be played at the same time. If you play certain keys together, you're making music!

You can learn to play the piano after you learn to read music. When you can read music, you can see how the notes are supposed to be played to make songs sound a certain way. Playing the piano takes work, but it can be fun, too.



Best Friends

Alessandra and Sarah are in fourth grade. They are best friends. They spend all of their time together in class, after school, and on the weekends, too. The girls have been friends for two whole years. They never fought, not until that day.

“Alessandra, can I borrow your new pencil?” Sarah asked. Alessandra’s dad had just given her a special pink pencil with hearts on it, and it had a heart-shaped eraser.

“Of course, Sarah, you’re my best friend, right?” answered Alessandra.

Sarah used the pencil for the afternoon. As they were walking home, Alessandra asked for her special pencil back. Sarah looked, but she couldn’t find it! She checked her backpack, her pocket, and behind her ear.

Alessandra was so upset that she ran home and cried. She was mad at Sarah for being so careless. She wondered if her dad would be mad, too.

The next day at school Sarah and Alessandra ignored each other. They had never gone a whole day without speaking! When Alessandra got home, her dad noticed the big frown on her face and the tears in her eyes.

Alessandra told him what happened. Her dad said that he wasn’t mad and she shouldn’t be either! Sometimes accidents happen, even between best friends.

Alessandra realized she had been silly. She called Sarah and said she was sorry for getting mad. Sarah said she was sorry for losing the pencil in the first place. They made up and decided never to get mad at each other again.



The Spelling Bee

The final round of the Jefferson School Spelling Bee is tomorrow, and Jonas, Manuel, and Kyla are the final three contestants. They were all winners in their class spelling bees, and now they must compete against each other for the school spelling bee.

Jonas isn't looking forward to the spelling bee. He doesn't like spelling bees that much and doesn't think they mean anything. He doesn't care if he wins or not. So Jonas decides to play football all afternoon rather than study. That night he plays video games on the Internet, too!

Manuel wants to win very badly. He thinks spelling bees are important and can prove who is the best speller. He studies the words all night long. He has his mother quiz him several times, using flash cards and a timer. He even practices spelling the words backwards! Manuel wants to be prepared.

Kyla has never been in a contest before. She feels nervous and sick to her stomach. She wants to win, but she is not sure she can. She tries to study, but the words are hard to spell. She gets frustrated, so she gives up and goes to bed.

At 9:00 the next morning, the spelling bee begins. The contestants each stand in front of their class numbers. As the whole school watches, Mr. Phelps reads the words one by one. After several rounds, there is a winner. The class claps and cheers for the winner. "Congratulations!" said Mr. Phelps. "Now, it's on to the City Championship! And if you win there, you'll go to the State Championship!"



What Makes an Insect an Insect?

How are a bee, an ant, and a fly the same? For one thing, they are all insects. They all have six legs and three main body parts, called the head, the thorax, and the abdomen.

An insect's head has eyes and a mouth, and many have antennae, too. Insects use their antennae to feel, taste, and smell things.

The middle part of an insect's body is called the thorax. If an insect has wings, this is where they are located.

The hind part of an insect's body is the abdomen. It is usually the largest part of an insect's body. People have abdomens too, but some people might call their abdomen a belly.

Insects have skeletons, too. But their skeletons are on the outside of their bodies, and they are called exoskeletons. The skeletons are very hard, so they protect the soft inside part of the insect's body.

So the next time you see a bug, look at it closely. Is it an insect or not? How can you tell?



George Washington

George Washington was America's first president. He was important. Washington was born on February 22, 1732. He lived in Virginia. He had five brothers and sisters.

In school, math was George's best subject. He stopped going to school at age 15. This was not unusual at the time.

George had many jobs when he was young. He was a soldier. He worked as a farmer. He had other jobs, too.

In 1759, he married his wife, Martha. She had been married before. She had two children. George and Martha did not have children of their own.

George took a new job in 1775. He led Americans in the Revolutionary War. They won the war. America became its own country.

In 1789, George was elected president of the United States. He was 57 years old. George was president for eight years.

When George died, the capitol of the United States was moved near his home. It is called Washington, D.C., and is named after George!

Have you seen his face on a U.S. dollar bill?



The Treasure Hunt

The neighborhood treasure hunt was about to start. Everyone was at the starting point and had his or her instructions. Ming and her family were fifth in line in their car, behind their other neighbors. The loud and shrill whistle sounded, and the cars took off.

Ming quickly looked at the list and decided it wasn't that long. First on the list was a basket full of flowers. They drove around the neighborhood looking everywhere. When they turned the last corner, Ming spotted a magenta basket of almost-dead flowers at the end of someone's driveway, which meant they got 50 points!

The next item on the list was a stray shoe. They headed through back roads and alleys toward the grocery store. Her father pointed out a tennis shoe that was lying on the road by a dumpster. Ming was excited; they now had 50 more points!

Now for the third item on the list—a discarded barbecue grill. That wasn't too hard—it was the end of the barbecue season. They soon had 50 more points when they saw an old, rusty grill in a vacant lot.

There are two more items to go—an electric sign with burned-out bulbs on a store and a red convertible. They found the sporty red convertible when they passed the car dealership. Fifty points for Ming's family! One more to go and only 15 minutes in which to find it and get back to the starting point. Ming's dad smiled at her as he turned the car around and headed toward home. Ming was worried and wondered why he was heading home. Then she remembered that two blocks from their house was an electronics repair shop. She saw it and noticed that the "o" on the sign was dark. Ming shouted, "Score!" Everything on the list was accounted for, so the family headed to the finish line. It had been a great day of family fun with the neighborhood treasure hunt!



The Dilemma

Sophia Washington was the new girl in class. Her family had just moved to town from out of state, and she didn't know anyone, not even her neighbors! She was scared to death to go to her new school, but her parents said she had to go anyway. Sophia had always been on the shy side, and making new friends was hard for her.

She walked into the classroom with her stomach in knots. Her palms were sweaty too, because she was so nervous. As she stood in front of the room being introduced by the teacher, a girl in the third row caught Sophia's eye. They smiled at each other, and Sophia relaxed a little bit. Maybe it wouldn't be so bad after all. She was happy when the teacher sat her right next to the girl who had smiled at her. Kari introduced herself to Sophia and offered to show her around school and introduce her to some other people in class.

The two girls ate lunch together all week and talked on the phone all of the time after school. Sophia was glad that Kari was her new friend. Kari even asked her to go shopping with her and her older sister, Samantha. Sophia hoped her parents would say yes and let her go.

On Saturday, the three girls went to the mall to hang out, go shopping, and have lunch. They were standing at a jewelry counter looking at all of the sparkly bracelets, when Sophia noticed that Samantha had picked up something shiny. As Sophia watched, Samantha quickly looked around and put the shiny object in her pocket. Sophia couldn't believe her eyes! What was she supposed to do now? Kari was her only new friend at school, but how could she be friends with her when her older sister was shoplifting? Should she tell Kari? Should she tell Kari's parents or her own parents? If Samantha got caught, would Sophia get in trouble too? She didn't know what to do; this was the worst dilemma she had ever had to deal with. Sophia wished her parents had never moved to this new town in the first place.



Animal Talk

Humans communicate with each other all the time. We talk, phone, write, email, and text message.

Animals can't do these things, so how do they communicate with each other?

We've all heard dogs bark and growl, and cats meow and purr. Making sounds is the most common form of animal "talk." Dogs make sounds when they're scared, happy, or angry, and they make sounds to warn you. Gorillas and beavers make throaty sounds. Some animals, like grasshoppers, make sounds by rubbing their legs together.

Some animal talking is done through marking. Special markings on an animal may tell another animal its species, age, or sex. A scratch on a tree made by an animal is another type of marking.

Honeybees dance to show where a new source of food is. Certain female animals send out smells that attract males. And we all know how skunks tell us that they're threatened!

Other animals use touch to talk. Wolves wrestle to figure out their rank in the pack. There are even animals that light up to talk! Eels and lightning bugs are two examples.

One way humans are like animals is when we communicate without using our voices, like using sign language or body language. Humans can learn so much just by watching each other. So maybe we don't have to be Dr. Doolittle after all. Maybe we already know what the animals are saying.



Will the Real Tasmanian Devil Please Stand Up?

Have you heard of a Tasmanian devil? Does the name make you think of a cartoon? Do you know that there really is such a thing as a Tasmanian devil? It comes from Tasmania, in Australia.

The Tasmanian devil is an animal about the size of a large dog. It can grow to be about 30 inches, or 0.8 meters, long. It can weigh up to 22 pounds, or 10 kilograms. A female is smaller than a male. Some people say a Tasmanian devil looks like a bear because it has dark fur, its jaws are large, and its teeth are strong.

Its name comes from the devilish look on its face. It has a hoarse snarl and a bad temper. You might think it would be a good hunter, but the Tasmanian devil is actually quite lazy. Rather than hunt for food itself, it lets others hunt. It eats their scraps — bones, fur, and all.

Tasmanian devils sleep during the day, which means they're nocturnal, or awake at night. They're easy to hear at night because they are noisy eaters.

At one time, Tasmanian devils were almost extinct. They were killed off by dingoes, or wild dogs, from Australia. They are now a protected species, so their numbers are increasing again.



The Litterbusters

Elizabeth was riding the public bus downtown with her older brother, Brian. It was pretty hot outside, so they decided to get off the bus and buy some cold drinks. They got their refreshments and took a walk down the street toward the museum.

As they waited at the crosswalk, they saw a fancy, expensive-looking new car pull up. As they admired the car, the passenger door opened a bit and out rolled an empty juice bottle. Then the light turned green and the car sped off.

Elizabeth and Brian could hardly believe it. Who would deliberately throw trash in the middle of the street? Brian noticed all the other garbage in gutters and on the sidewalks. He explained to Elizabeth how much he hated litter and how lazy it was to be a “litterbug.” They decided that they had to get their neighborhood cleaned up because it looked horrible.

When they got home, Elizabeth and Brian wrote a letter to the mayor of their city.

They suggested that the city put public trash cans on every corner, and described how they felt about people littering in their town. They wrote that they wanted to see the streets and sidewalks cleaned up. They even had everyone in the neighborhood sign the letter to give it more impact. Then Brian mailed it to the mayor.

A few weeks later, Brian told Elizabeth he wanted to show her something. He took his sister for a walk up the street. What do you think they saw? There were new trash cans on every corner and hardly any litter on the sidewalks!

The mayor had listened to them. Elizabeth and Brian were happy and proud. They decided they would always help keep their town clean.



Maria Rosita and the Mukluk Song

Hundreds of years ago, in a kingdom far away, there lived a girl named Maria Rosita. She lived with her poor father at the foot of a great mountain. Maria Rosita always sang lovely songs to keep her father happy. However, she had to be careful not to be heard by anyone but her father, for the Giant Mukluk was bound to come if he heard. The Giant Mukluk was a creature of the mountain who wanted to steal all music and make the world a gloomy place.

One day, Maria Rosita was singing her tune softly and pulling a cart of coal to their hovel when, suddenly, she heard a great banging and clanging. She was sure it was the Giant Mukluk and that he had heard her song. Bravely, she sang louder and louder to show him she was not afraid. After many minutes passed, the clanging stopped.

This went on for many days. Maria Rosita hummed her song and did her chores. The banging would come and Maria Rosita would sing her lovely song louder until the noise stopped.

One day, there was no banging or clanging. As Maria Rosita hummed softly, she saw a pretty lavender butterfly outside the window. She sang her tune to the butterfly until it fluttered away.

The following day, the lavender butterfly came again. This time, it brought with it a handsome prince! The prince explained that he had been the Giant Mukluk. He had come to steal her music, but when she kept singing louder, her singing soothed him. Her brave and beautiful song broke the spell that made him so gloomy!

Maria Rosita and her father went to live in the prince's castle. There she sang her lovely songs all day and made every heart glad.



Elephant and Woolly Mammoth: Are They the Same?

The woolly mammoth roamed Earth from about two million years ago until 9,000 years ago. Elephants are related to mammoths, and are similar in many ways.

The biggest difference between the elephant and mammoth is hair. Mammoths lived during the last ice age and needed thick fur to help keep them warm. The African elephant lives in hot, dry places and the Asian elephant lives in warm, moist areas. Because elephants don't have to worry about keeping warm, they don't need the same furry coat.

Mammoths had long trunks that were not quite as long as the African elephant's trunk. They were more like the size of the Asian elephant's trunk, perhaps just a bit longer. Like elephants, mammoths were herbivores. That means they didn't eat meat. Just as you may have seen elephants do, mammoths used their trunks to drink and to grab food. They could eat up to 600 pounds (273 kilograms) of food every day!

Both male and female mammoths had huge, curved tusks. Male and female African elephants also have long tusks. Female Asian elephants don't have any tusks at all.

Mammoths had large ears, but they were not as big as those of elephants now. The African elephant has huge ears, which helps get rid of body heat, keeping the elephant cooler. As you can see, elephants and mammoths are a lot alike, but they are not the same!



The Great Pyramids

The pyramids of Egypt are said to be some of the most amazing buildings on Earth. A pyramid is defined as a large building with a square base that has four sloping, triangular sides. The sides come to a point at the top. The pyramids of Egypt were made of enormous blocks of stone. These stones were laid so perfectly that not even a tiny space was left between them. A pyramid took thousands of workers and many years to complete.

Egyptians used the great pyramids as tombs for pharaohs, or kings. The most famous pyramids were built about 4,500 years ago. Egyptians thought a person lived forever, and that when a person died in one life, he or she went on to the next life. They mummified, or dried and preserved, the kings' bodies and buried them in these great tombs. They put treasures and food in the tombs for use in the next life.

Many large pyramids were surrounded by smaller ones, which were used for the king's wife and children. The king's officials were also buried nearby in small tombs. These tombs, called mastabas, had sloping sides and flat roofs.

The ruins of 35 major pyramids and 40 small ones still stand near the Nile River. The largest is the Great Pyramid of Khufu. It was 481 feet, or 146 meters, tall when built and it was Earth's tallest building for more than 4,000 years!

These huge buildings provide clues to ancient times. They also serve as a reminder of Egypt's great past.

At the Circus



It was an extra special day for Leticia because her family had three tickets to the circus. Leticia had never been to a circus, so she was very excited and couldn't wait to see what it was all about. She had often heard about the mysterious performers and incredible animals, but she didn't entirely know what to expect.

As they entered the large, striped tent called the Big Top, a funny-looking clown came up to Leticia and asked her to pull the lavender flower on his shirt. When she did, water squirted out of the flower onto the clown's face, which made Leticia laugh loudly. She shook the clown's hand and told him she appreciated his wacky sense of humor.

Leticia and her family found their seats just as a drum roll announced the beginning of the show. During the first act, three clowns entered the ring, which is a round area where the action takes place. The clowns used balls, bicycles, and hoops to perform many tricks. Their childish jokes made the entire audience laugh so loudly that Leticia's ears hurt from the noise, and her cheeks hurt from smiling.

Next, a man entered a different ring with two ferocious-looking tigers. Leticia was worried that the man would get hurt, but her uncle told her that the tigers were well trained. The trainer led the tigers around the wire cage several times. The trainer had the tigers sit on tall, narrow stools and jump through a fire-lit hoop! Leticia was still nervous and felt her heart beating fast, but she enjoyed the thrilling act.

After that, five elephants and two elephant trainers entered a third ring. Leticia was overjoyed to see her favorite animals. It was amazing to watch the huge elephants balance on top of tiny stools. A lady in a beautiful, sequined costume climbed up on top of one elephant and spread her arms out wide. Then the elephant began to walk on its two hind legs.

The last performers to come out and entertain the audience were a high-wire team. The team was a group of men and women who walked on wires high above the ground. The wires were only about as thick as Leticia's thumb! Some members of the team carried a pole for balance. Others strapped their legs onto ropes and hung upside down, twirling hoops around their arms at the same time. A few of the men and women did many dangerous flips and turns on swings. Leticia's aunt explained that these performers train for many years to learn these tricks.

When the final act was over, Leticia got up with her aunt and uncle to leave. The same clown that she had met when they arrived handed her a giant flower made from bright balloons. Leticia couldn't imagine a better way to spend the day, and she thanked her aunt and uncle profusely for the invitation to spend the day with them.



Small Girl in a Big Town

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Passage 2
Fiction

Tuesday was an extremely depressing day for Gloria because she was leaving her house, neighbors, friends, and school to move to a new home in the city.

“Do we really have to go, Mom?” asked Gloria sadly, through tears.

“Oh, Gloria! I’m sorry that you’re so upset,” replied Mom with a sigh. “But I think that you’ll like living in a city. Life there will be much more exciting and interesting. You will be able to experience culture and diversity, and you will learn so much more about the world. Trust me, in time you will be grateful that we are providing you with this opportunity to expand your knowledge of the world.”

Gloria didn’t find Mom’s words very comforting. Gloria had never moved before, and she didn’t want to now. She had lived in a small town in a rural area her whole life, and she could not imagine living in a city and leaving behind all that she knew. The only thing on her mind was how nervous she was and how terrible it would be when she got to her new home!

As they approached the city, Gloria looked out of the window and noticed the beautiful skyline. She had never seen so many tall buildings before, and some of her initial fear was replaced by excitement.

“Look at those amazing buildings! I can’t believe how tall they are and how many there are. Will we be living in one of them?” asked Gloria.

Mom and Dad nodded their heads yes, and a small smile spread across Gloria’s face.

Dad drove the car down the busy streets as Gloria took in all the sights. She saw a video store, a pet shop, a grocery store, a library, restaurants, and a beauty salon. They stopped at several lights, and after making more than a few turns, finally arrived in front of their new home. And it was indeed an elegant skyscraper!

They parked the car in the underground garage and rode up the mirrored elevator to the twenty-fifth floor. The first thing Gloria did when she went inside was to look out the floor-to-ceiling window in the main living room. The view all around was absolutely amazing! She saw other tall buildings, the rooftops of shorter buildings, parks, and even the school she would attend. Gloria imagined that she could see her old home in the country.

Saying good-bye to her friends had been difficult and sad for Gloria, but she was looking forward to attending a new school and meeting new friends. She decided to have a good attitude and explore the unfamiliar city—it would be an adventure!

Gloria began to realize that even if you are unhappy or frightened, you can still try to make the best of things. Making life fun is all about keeping your attitude positive!

Earth's Largest Animals



Have you wondered what the largest animals on Earth are? The answer to that question depends on where you look — on land, or in the ocean. On land, the largest animals are African elephants. What could possibly be larger than an elephant, you might ask? Well, the blue whale is bigger! Not only is it the largest sea animal, it is even bigger than an African elephant!

While African elephants are the largest land animals on Earth, they are tiny in comparison to blue whales. African elephants can be about 3.5 meters, or 11.5 feet tall at the shoulder and can weigh almost 5.5 metric tons, or 6.6 tons. In comparison, blue whales can be about 30 meters, or 105 feet long and weigh about 135 metric tons, or 148.5 tons. That's a big difference! In fact, blue whales are the largest of all animals that have ever lived on Earth.

Both African elephants and blue whales are mammals, which means that the females of both animals produce milk to feed their babies. Mammals are also warm-blooded. The body temperature of elephants and whales remains about the same no matter where they are. All mammals are covered by hair at some point in their lives, although neither African elephants nor blue whales have very much hair. As adults, they both have just a few bristles here and there. Mammals also breathe air through lungs. While a whale must come to the surface of the water to breathe, blue whales usually stay near the surface of the water since that is also where their food is.

Both elephants and whales have a good sense of hearing — both can hear low-pitched sounds that humans cannot hear. Although whales have very good sight, they have no sense of smell. Elephants, on the other hand, have poor eyesight and a good sense of smell.

People have used both the blue whale and the African elephant as resources. For example, people have hunted the whale for food and oil. Elephants have been trained to do work and are prized for their ivory tusks. Today, agreements, or laws, protect these giant mammals so that they can continue to live in their natural habitat without facing extinction.



The Busy Life of Honeybees

G
Passage 4
Nonfiction

Although there are about 20,000 kinds of bees in the world, honeybees are the most useful to people because they produce honey, which people use as food, and beeswax—a substance that is used to make candles, crayons, and makeup.

Honeybees are social bees that live in groups, called colonies, inside hives. A hive might be a special white, rectangular box or a hollow area in a tree. The central structure of the colony is the wax comb, which is made up of six-sided, white wax chambers, or rooms. Some honeybee colonies have as many as 80,000 members. There are usually three types of bees in a colony—a queen, workers, and drones—and each type has a specific role to perform.

The queen's only job is to lay eggs, and in the spring, the queen lays about 2,000 eggs a day! Each colony has only one queen, who may live for up to five years. If the old queen disappears or becomes feeble, a new queen is made. Sometimes a young queen fights with an old queen until one stings the other to death.

A drone's only job is to mate with the queen. There can be up to 500 drones in each colony. Drones aren't able to hunt for food because their tongues are too short to suck up nectar from flowers, so they depend on worker bees to feed them. Drones live in the hive in the summer, but in the winter, worker bees may kick them out of the hive if there isn't enough food.

Worker bees neither lay eggs nor mate because they have other jobs to do. They spend their entire lives performing duties, or jobs, and thousands of them live in a colony. At the beginning of their lives, workers clean the hive and feed other bees. Then they produce wax and build honeycomb cells. Later, they protect the hive and eventually hunt for food. Workers hunt for food by sucking up nectar from flowers with their long tongues. Back in the hive, workers put the nectar in an empty cell, where it changes into honey. A worker bee can live for anywhere from six weeks to several months.

People thousands of years ago ate honey that they stole from hives found in trees. Today, farmers keep hives of bees, usually in boxes, and sell the honey that the bees make. Beekeepers have learned to handle their bees carefully and take their work very seriously. They wear special clothing, including gloves for their hands and veils to protect their faces so they don't get stung. If you find a hive of bees on your property, you can call a beekeeper to come and collect your bees! Thanks to the amazing and busy lives of bees, we can enjoy the sweet and sugary taste of honey and the fresh clean scent of candles.

Theodore's Supermarket



Theodore had a big homework project assignment for the weekend. He was supposed to design his own ideal supermarket. The best way to do this, according to his teacher, was to go to the local supermarket and analyze how the store is arranged.

Since Sunday was shopping day for his dad, Theodore took his notebook and tagged along. Arriving at the supermarket, Theodore's dad grabbed a shopping cart. Theodore made a note for his supermarket plan: "Make sure carts aren't noisy," he wrote down immediately.

As they entered the store, Theodore noted the produce section. Apples, bananas, potatoes, sprouts, asparagus, and onions were bagged. Using the big, white scales, Theodore weighed each bag to see what it cost and placed it in the cart, thinking about each step in the process. Then he mapped out where he thought the scales would go in his store to be the most convenient for customers. Theodore's dad, the family chef, spun around a rack displaying little bags of spices and picked out taco seasoning for one of the dinner recipes that week.

The next aisle was brimming with food in cans and jars. Theodore updated his diagram to include black beans, refried beans, peas, sauces, salsas, and soups. Confounded by the dizzying shelves of soups, Theodore noted that the ones in his store would be better organized so people could find things easily.

Slowly, they went up and down every aisle in the store as Theodore's dad stocked up on their family staples. Theodore mapped out where certain departments would go and how his shelves would be arranged.

A sign read "Home Supplies" in the next aisle. Theodore imagined how he would organize these items while his dad picked out a few things they needed. Sponges, dish soap, laundry soap, brooms, mops, recycling bags—all these things were neatly organized.

The last part of their shopping trip was the dairy aisle. Theodore realized how well planned this was, so customers could choose their dairy products last and let them remain cold in the dairy case while they did the rest of the shopping. Theodore, figuring his dairy aisle should also be near the checkout area, mapped out his store. His dad picked up some milk, eggs, margarine, and sour cream. "We're out of orange juice, too," Theodore reminded him.

The shopping was finally done, and so was Theodore's map. Later on, having put the finishing touches on his store, Theodore wondered what other kinds of buildings he could design someday and thought that perhaps a career as an architect might be in his future.



The Messy Room

H
Passage 2
Fiction

“Mom, where’s my favorite baseball hat?” Nathaniel bellowed loudly down the hallway. Nathaniel couldn’t find anything in that disordered and chaotic room of his.

Nathaniel’s room was a disaster; actually, it was a complete catastrophe. Clothes overflowed from his laundry basket like a pot boiling over, smelling like old socks. Dirty, sticky dishes littered the room from left to right, and baseballs, footballs, and even basketballs, were tossed everywhere.

“You’re worried about finding your hat? Take a second and explain where that floor of yours has disappeared to these days,” his mom responded with a holler. She was exhausted from arguing with Nathaniel about his room; if he wanted to let it be such a disgusting mess, he had to live with the consequences.

As Nathaniel searched through his closet, camping equipment and a skateboard from the high shelves plummeted to the floor with a crash. His twin sister, Jacqueline, casually sauntered into the room and surveyed the mess.

“What are you looking for?” she asked, a devilish look in her eyes and a smirk on her face.

“My lucky baseball hat—the blue and orange one that Grandpa William gave me,” Nathaniel answered, slightly panicked at this point.

Jacqueline sighed an exasperated sigh. She was sick of this misplaced disarray, too. Each day it was something new—perhaps a lost shoe or a missing book. It didn’t matter. Nathaniel’s belongings always went missing, and it usually happened at the most inopportune moments.

However, today Jacqueline decided to be sympathetic because she realized that being unkind wasn’t going to remedy the problem—Nathaniel needed to learn his lesson. Jacqueline decided to take things into her own hands and have a little conversation with her parents.

Following baseball practice that day, Nathaniel came home to a completely different house. Dirty breakfast dishes were piled high in the sink while newspapers, magazines, and a week’s worth of mail were all scattered on the countertops in complete disorder. In fact, Nathaniel could barely open the front door because there were numerous pairs of shoes heaped up in the foyer!

“What’s wrong with this house?” Nathaniel exclaimed as his whole family walked into the kitchen with him.

“Nathaniel, we thought you liked things messy,” said his dad.

“Well . . .” Nathaniel pondered for a minute. Did his room really look this messy all of the time?

Nathaniel’s family convinced him that cleanliness is happiness, and after that day Nathaniel learned his lesson and decided not to be such a slob!

Customs of the World



There are more than six billion people living on Earth right now, on various continents, in different countries, with different cultures and customs. Groups of people with similar beliefs and ways of living share a culture, and the way these groups interact with each other and conduct their lives are called customs. For example, a custom in Saudi Arabia and Iran is for women to be covered when they are in public places. In China, people say their last names first in order to honor their family names.

In each culture, there are behaviors or customs that are a regular part of life. For example, people from different cultures greet each other differently. The Japanese and the Chinese bow, while people in India clasp their own hands together, and some groups in Africa raise one arm when they meet others. Kissing the hand of a superior person is done in some cultures. French men and women kiss each other on both cheeks as a greeting, but people in the United States shake hands to greet each other. The idea of shaking someone's right hand dates back to ancient Greeks, who used it as a sign of friendship.

Knowing different customs is important, especially if you travel to other countries. For example, it is considered a sign of respect to stick out your tongue in Tibet, but that would be rude in other parts of the world. In Indonesia, it is not polite to point your feet at someone or touch someone's head. These actions are not considered rude in other places. People in India take off their shoes in a place of worship, and the Japanese don't wear shoes in homes or schools.

In the United States, people keep their shoes on in schools and places of worship. Women open the door for men in South Korea, but it is just the opposite in Europe. People in India hiss to get attention. Would this be considered proper in your culture? In Vietnam, it is rude to make eye contact with someone else. In other places it is acceptable and even expected, especially if someone is speaking to you.

It is important to know and respect the customs of people from all different cultures. People would appreciate each other more and have more understanding if they only took the time to learn the customs of others.



Terra-Cotta Soldiers Stand Guard

H
Passage 4
Nonfiction

At the tomb of Qin Shi Huang, the first emperor of China, thousands of terra-cotta soldiers have been standing guard for the past 2,000 years. These sculpture warriors are an amazing sight and were first discovered in 1974.

In 1974, farmers were digging a well by the tomb in Xian, China, and unexpectedly found some pottery. Archaeologists came to dig in the area and found what they believe is an underground palace—a place for Emperor Shi Huang to spend eternity. It took about 720,000 workers at least 39 years to build the entire structure. So many treasures were buried with Shi Huang that the burial site needed to be guarded. Archaeologists think rivers of liquid mercury flowed in the tomb and that arrows were set as traps.

Although the actual tomb of the emperor has not been found, more than 8,000 life-size pottery soldiers have been uncovered. Only the legs of the soldiers are solid pottery, while their bodies, heads, and arms are hollow. Each soldier weighs about 250 pounds (114 kilos). The warriors do not all look the same—they have different ears, noses, and hairstyles. Some soldiers have beards, and some have mustaches. There are soldiers who look proud, mean, and angry, yet others are smiling. You will find soldiers that are standing and others that are kneeling.

The designs and colors of the clothing are different as well. Some warriors were sculptured wearing armor, which was most likely painted brown or black. The soldiers carried different weapons, such as metal spears, swords, or wooden weapons. The emperor wanted his grave to be guarded for all eternity by a replica, or model, of his own army as they stood guard. Over time, most of the color has faded from the uniforms worn by the terra-cotta warriors, which may have been originally painted bright red or green.

Other things were found at the site, too, including chariots and horses. The life-size chariots are made of bronze. The horses have large nostrils and big eyes. The terra-cotta animals look like they are waiting to go into battle. They are ready to protect their emperor—even in death!

Many people think that Emperor Shi Huang's tomb is the eighth wonder of the world.